

The Dragoman

"What of your promise to me, woman?" he demanded, sternly. "Are you the plaything of every dirty Egyptian when my back is turned?"

Nephthys had no reply. She looked at the pattern of the silver braid upon his jacket and followed carefully its curves and twists. The blue satin was the color of lapis lazuli, she thought, and the costume must have cost a lot of money—perhaps as much as fifty piasters.

"Your mother shall answer for this perfidy," continued the dragoman, in Arabic. "If I am to be toyed with and befooled, I will have my betrothal money back—every piaster of it!"

The girl's eyes dropped to her feet and examined the fragments of the jar.

"It is broken!" she said, with a wailing accent.

"Bah! there are more at Kench," he returned, kicking away a bit of the earthenware. "It will cost old Sëra more than the jar if she does not rule you better. Come!"

He waved his hand pompously and strutted past her to the door of her mother's hut, paying no heed to the evil looks of Kâra, who still stood motionless in his place.

The girl followed, meek and obedient.

They entered a square room lighted by two holes in the mud walls. The furniture was rude and scanty, and the beds were rushes from the Nile. A black goat that had a white spot over its left eye stood ruminating with its head out of one of the holes.